

Who takes part in adult learning and how?

Technological innovations, digitalisation and demographic changes are rapidly changing our world. People need new skills and new ways of learning. Acquiring knowledge and skills in a 'traditional' way, meaning at school or at university, is no longer sufficient to equip people with the necessary skills for their future career and a good quality life. Life-long learning becomes a necessity, and governments, stakeholders and social partners will have to find ways to help people reskill and upskills throughout their lives.

Forms of adult learning

Across the EU, adults are more likely to engage in non-formal or informal learning rather than in formal learning.

Formal learning – e.g. programmes in schools and universities

Non-formal learning – e.g. language courses, in-company training or workshops

Informal learning – e.g. learning from colleagues, visiting museums and reading (e-)books

Who takes part in adult learning?

Women are more likely to take part in adult learning than men



11.8%



10%

Younger adults are more likely to take part in adult learning than older ones

17.6%

25-34 years old



6.3%

55-64 years old



High-qualified adults are more likely to take part in adult learning than low-qualified adults, and...

4.3%

of low-qualified adults

8.9%

of medium-qualified adults

18.6%

of high-qualified adults

People living in cities are more likely to take part in adult learning than people living in towns, suburbs or rural areas



13.3%

Cities



8.9%

Towns and suburbs



8.6%

Rural areas

Where and what do adults learn?

Employers and non-formal education and training institutions are the main providers of non-formal learning for adults.

Most companies, which upskill their employees focus on technical and practical skills.



64.6%

of companies develop technical, practical and job-related skills.



1.2%

of companies develop numeracy or literacy skills.

Motivations for adults to learn

The main reasons adults take part in formal or non-formal learning are:

Employed
people

Inactive
people

Unemployed
people

Low-qualified
adults

High-qualified
adults



To do the job better and/or improve career prospects

84.3%

70.7%

72.5%

80.3%

85.7%



To increase individual knowledge on an interesting subject

58.2%

64.2%

66.2%

57.3%

63.5%



To acquire useful knowledge and/or skills for everyday life

46.8%

53.8%

54.8%

55.3%

47%



To increase the likelihood of getting or changing jobs

19.9%

52.2%

69.7%

28.7%

22.7%

Obstacles to adult learning

More than

4 in 10

adults in the EU who did not take part in learning reported that they did not want to.

For adults that wanted to take part in learning activities but did not, the main obstacles were:

Low-qualified adults



1. Family responsibilities **33.7%**



2. Lack of time **31.3%**



3. Too expensive **28.7%**



4. Health or age **22.9%**



5. Lack of employer's support or public services support **19.3%**



6. No suitable education or training courses available **16.6%**



7. Lack of entrance requirements **16.5%**



8. Distance **16.4%**



9. No access to a computer or internet **7.8%**



10. Negative previous learning experience **4.8%**

High-qualified adults



1. Lack of time **49.3%**



2. Family responsibilities **32.1%**



3. Too expensive **28.8%**



4. Lack of employer's support or public services support **22.7%**



5. Distance **16.1%**



6. No suitable education or training courses available **13.2%**



7. Health or age **6.3%**



8. Lack of entrance requirements **4.7%**



9. Negative previous learning experience **2.2%**



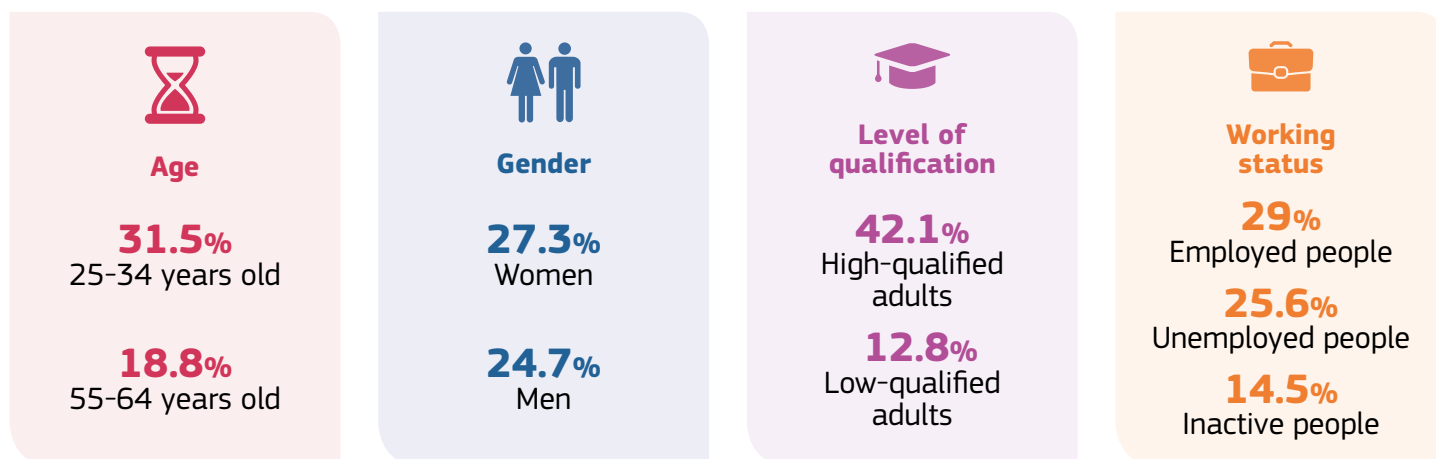
10. No access to a computer or internet **1.1%**

Access to information and guidance

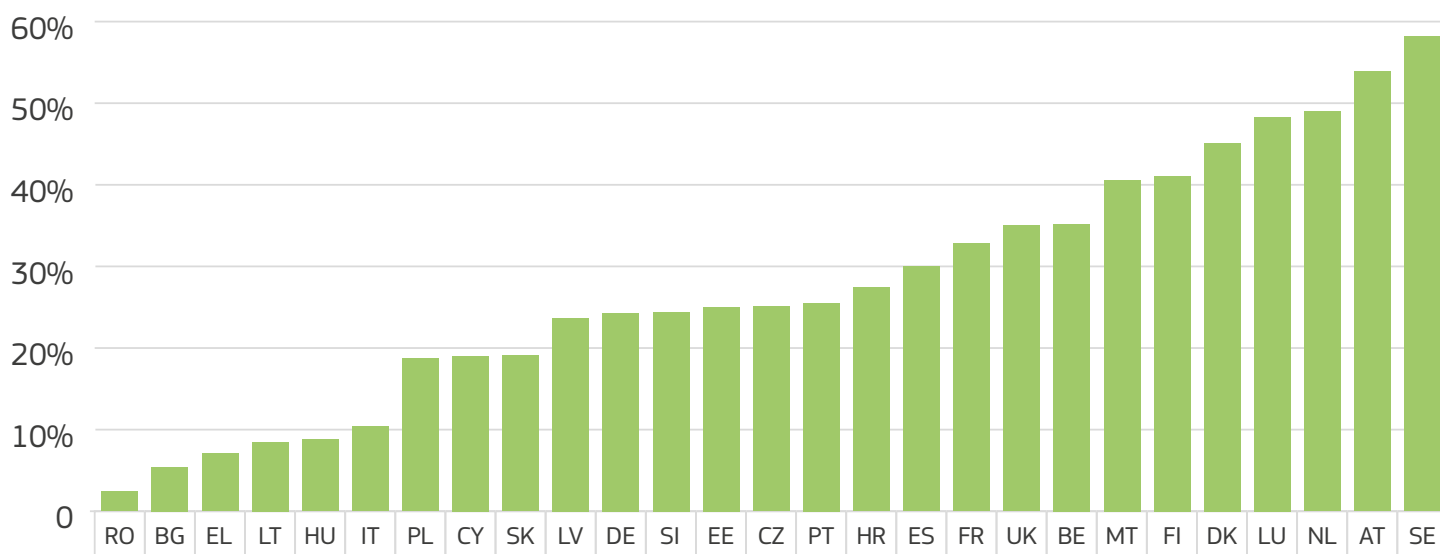
Personalised guidance is key in supporting learner's progress through all the steps of the upskilling process, but few low-qualified adults benefit from it.



Population receiving guidance and counselling:



Share of adults who receive guidance and counselling in Member States:



In countries where more adults receive guidance and counselling, more adults take part in learning.